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Wyoming National Guard tasked to support hurricane relief

CHEYENNE – The Wyoming National Guard has been tasked to send four UH-60 helicopters and two C-130s equipped with medical evacuation personnel and equipment to New Orleans to assist with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

Personnel were alerted Wednesday and Thursday to prepare to assist as soon as the state received an Interstate Mutual Aid Request from Louisiana.

The Wyoming National Guard received that document at 7 a.m. today. Gov. Dave Freudenthal signed and approved the request soon after. All personnel and equipment left Cheyenne by 9:15 a.m.

"In a time of devastation and chaos for the Gulf Coast states, the Wyoming National Guard is answering the call for help," Gov. Dave Freudenthal said. "I know I speak for the rest of the state when I say my thoughts and prayers will be with all the victims of Hurricane Katrina, as well as Guard members and others who are joining in the recovery efforts."

The Wyoming Air National Guard's 187th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron sent two crews, consisting of four flight nurses and six aeromedical evacuation technicians, on the C-130s with missions to transport patients from New Orleans to Shreveport, La., and Little Rock, Ark.

The Wyoming Army National Guard sent 19 soldiers to fly missions in the New Orleans area. Seven soldiers traveled as an advance party on the C-130s to prepare for the unit's arrival late Friday night or early Saturday. The unit expects to be on site for two weeks.

The Wyoming National Guard is expecting more requests for support as recovery operations continue.

"We are looking at other capabilities we have at the unit and squadron levels to determine how we can support long-term recovery operations, should further requests for

support come to us," said Lt. Col. Tod Larson, Wyoming National Guard director of military support.

The Wyoming National Guard is among the more than 15,000 National Guard personnel assisting Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.